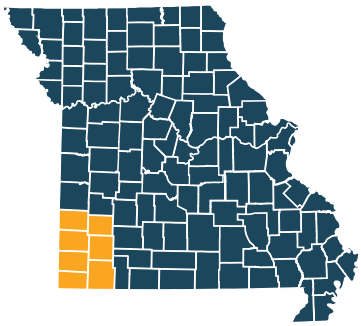


COMMUTING PROFILE
SOUTHWEST REGION
JULY 2026

Overview

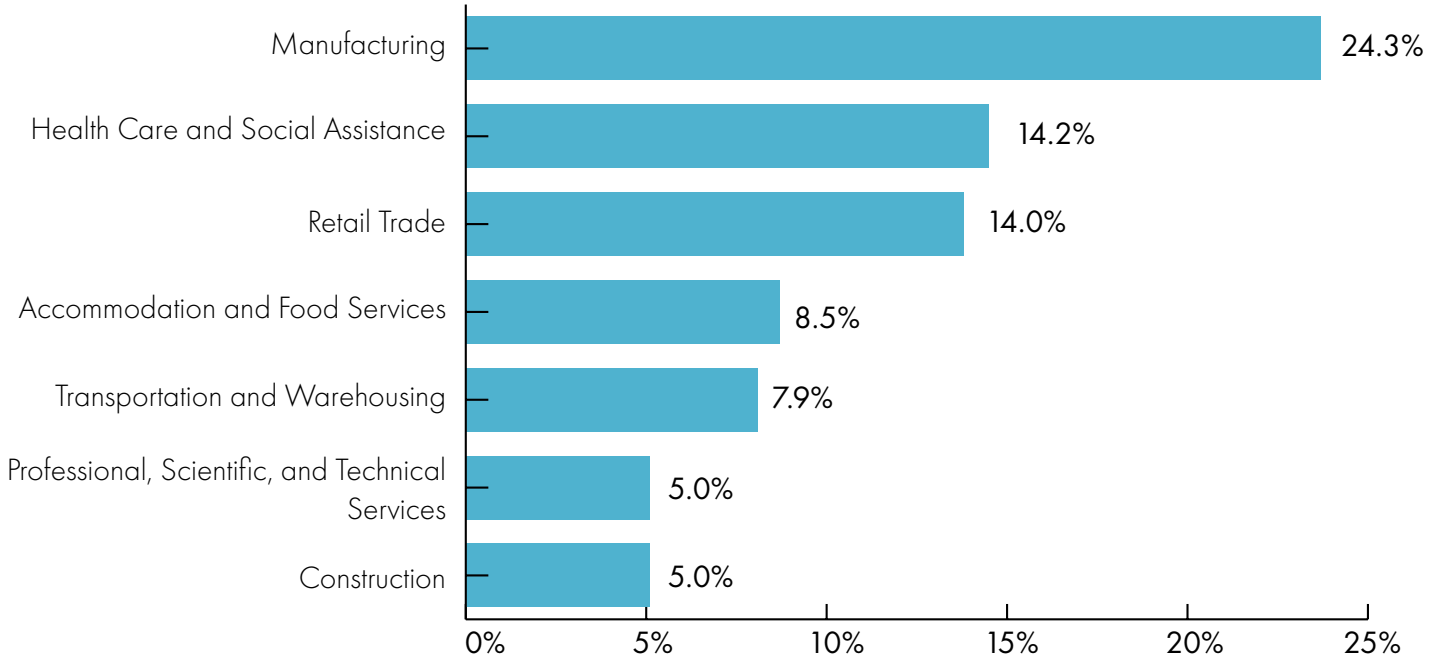
The Southwest Workforce Development Area (WDA) consists of seven counties: Barry, Barton, Dade, Jasper, Lawrence, McDonald, and Newton. Some of the larger cities in the region include Joplin, Carthage, Monett, Neosho, and Webb City. In 2023, there were 95,681 total private primary jobs** in the Southwest WDA, making up 4.2 percent of private primary jobs in Missouri. Most workers employed in the region (50.3%) were aged 30 to 54. Workers aged 29 or younger were 26.0 percent of the workforce and those 55 or older were 23.7 percent. In 2023, 48.2 percent of private primary jobs in the Southwest WDA paid more than $3,333 per month. Of the remaining jobs, 15.6 percent paid $1,250 per month or less and 36.1 percent paid between $1,251 and $3,333 per month. In 2023, there were more men (55.7%) than women (44.3%) in the Southwest WDA workforce employed at the private primary jobs.

In 2023, 41.7 percent of employees living in the Southwest WDA commuted fewer than 10 miles to work, 23.3 percent commuted 10 to 24 miles, 14.4 percent commuted 25 to 50 miles, and 20.6 percent traveled more than 50 miles to work.

Industry

Manufacturing was the largest employing industry in the region with 23,296 jobs (24.3% of total private primary jobs in the region). *Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade,* and *Accommodation and Food Services* were other major industry sectors having at least 8 percent of the region's employment share. Joplin, Carthage, Webb City, Neosho, and Monett were the top cities for employment in the Southwest WDA.

Top Southwest WDA Industry - Private Primary Jobs Percentage



Where the Southwest WDA Labor Force Works and Lives

Of the 95,681 workers employed in the Southwest WDA in 2023, 70.9 percent commuted to work from within the region. The remainder (29.1%) commuted into the Southwest WDA from homes outside of the region.

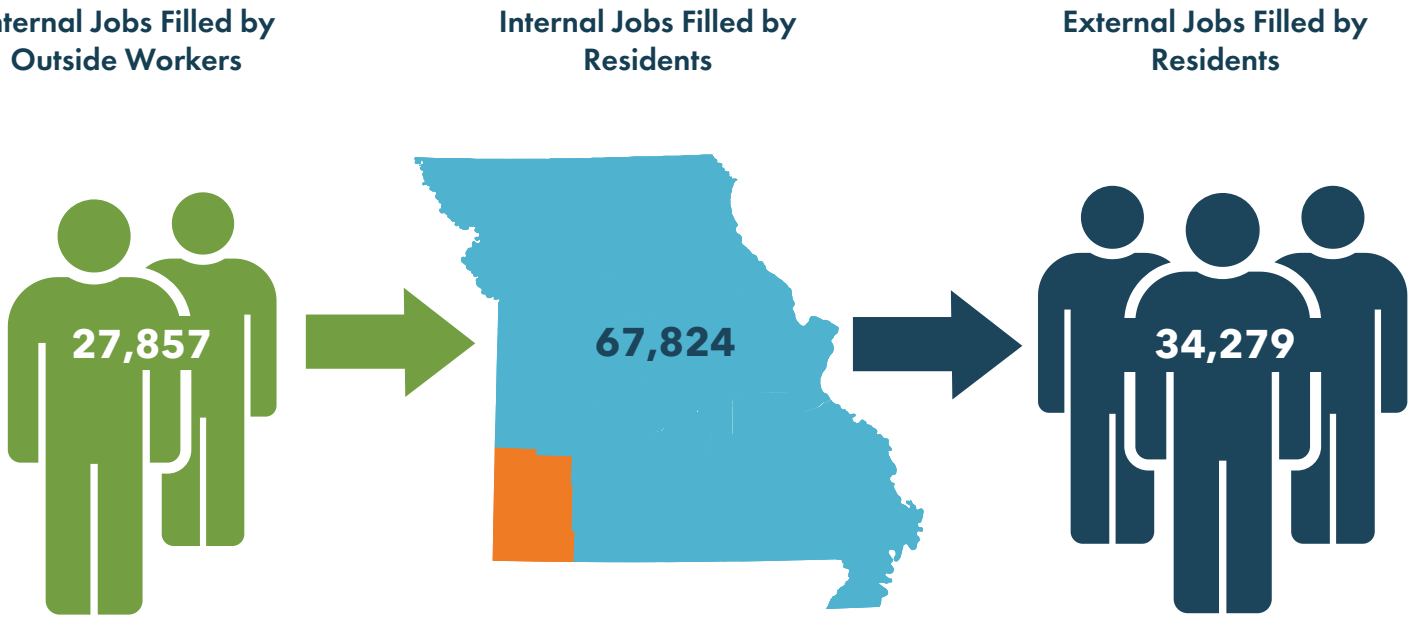
Description	2023	
	Count	Share
Southwest WDA Labor Market Size (Private Primary Jobs)		
Employed in the Southwest WDA	95,681	100.0%
Living in the Southwest WDA	102,103	106.7%
Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	-6,422	-
In-Area Labor Force Efficiency (Private Primary Jobs)		
Living in the Southwest WDA	102,103	100.0%
Living and Employed in the Southwest WDA	67,824	66.4%
Living in the Southwest WDA but Employed Outside	34,279	33.6%
In-Area Employment Efficiency (Private Primary Jobs)		
Employed in the Southwest WDA	95,681	100.0%
Employed and Living in the Southwest WDA	67,824	70.9%
Employed in the Southwest WDA but Living Outside	27,857	29.1%

Of the region's residents who are in the workforce, 33.6 percent, or 34,279, commuted to jobs outside of the region. The Southwest WDA attracted 27,857 workers from outside of the region. More than 67,800 Southwest WDA residents lived and worked in the region.

The top five Missouri counties where Southwest WDA workers resided (in descending order) were Jasper, Newton, Lawrence, Barry, and McDonald. These counties were home to nearly 68 percent of the region's workforce.

Inflow/Outflow

Overall, 102,103 employees lived in the Southwest WDA and 95,681 workers were employed in the region, resulting in a net outflow of 6,422 workers from the region.



The following table shows the worker composition for the job inflow and outflow groups as well as worker characteristics of the interior job flow. Of the 67,824 individuals who lived and worked in the region, 26.1 percent were aged 29 years or younger, 50.4 percent were aged 30 to 54 years, and 23.6 percent were aged 55 years or older. About 42 percent worked in the *Services* industry.

Southwest WDA Description	2023	
	Count	Share
Outflow Job Characteristics (Private Primary Jobs)		
External Jobs Filled by Residents	34,279	100.0%
Workers Aged 29 or younger	9,762	28.5%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	16,737	48.8%
Workers Aged 55 or older	7,780	22.7%
Workers Earning $1,250 per month or less	5,686	16.6%
Workers Earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	11,701	34.1%
Workers Earning More than $3,333 per month	16,892	49.3%
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	6,162	18.0%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	10,204	29.8%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	17,913	52.3%
Inflow Job Characteristics (Private Primary Jobs)		
Internal Jobs Filled by Outside Workers	27,857	100.0%
Workers Aged 29 or younger	7,197	25.8%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	13,958	50.1%
Workers Aged 55 or older	6,702	24.1%
Workers Earning $1,250 per month or less	4,550	16.3%
Workers Earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	9,367	33.6%
Workers Earning More than $3,333 per month	13,940	50.0%
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	6,451	23.2%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	10,379	37.3%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	11,027	39.6%
Interior Flow Job Characteristics (Private Primary Jobs)		
Internal Jobs Filled by Residents	67,824	100.0%
Workers Aged 29 or younger	17,688	26.1%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	34,163	50.4%
Workers Aged 55 or older	15,973	23.6%
Workers Earning $1,250 per month or less	10,412	15.4%
Workers Earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	25,190	37.1%
Workers Earning More than $3,333 per month	32,222	47.5%
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	23,494	34.6%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	15,992	23.6%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	28,338	41.8%

Commuter Pattern

The top five counties where Southwest WDA workers living in the region are employed at their private primary jobs (in descending order) were Jasper, Newton, Greene, Barry, and Lawrence.

The table below indicates that many residents commuted to another county for employment. All but Jasper County had at least half of their residents commuting outside their county of residence for work. Larger cities, such as Joplin in Jasper County, attracted workers from the surrounding counties. Jasper County also had a lower percentage of workers who left the county to find work. The Southwest location in the state, in addition to Interstate 44 and U.S. Highway 60 access, improves the ability of Southwest Region residents to commute to their workplace.

Southwest WDA	
Percent of Southwest WDA Residents Working Outside of Home County	
Barry	**58%**
Barton	**70%**
Dade	**74%**
Jasper	**43%**
Lawrence	**80%**
McDonald	**69%**
Newton	**67%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2023*), URL: https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

**2023 is the latest year for which LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (commuting data) is available from the U.S. Census Bureau. To maintain the consistency of data in this report, all relevant data used is also from 2023, although later data for some data points was available.*

LEHD data infrastructure tracks jobs as its primary unit instead of people. As such, the system naturally captures more than one job per person when available in the data. The **dominant (or primary) job for an individual is defined as the job that earned the individual the most money. Constructed this way, ***the number of primary jobs should be equal to the number of workers.***

This report was prepared by the staff of the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). All data in this report was current at the time of publication and is subject to revision. This workforce product was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. The product was created by the recipient and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The U.S. Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership. This product is copyrighted by the institution that created it. Internal use by an organization and/or personal use by an individual for non-commercial purposes is permissible. All other uses require the prior authorization of the copyright owner.